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Fall 1997 Meeting of CSAS and Regional RAP Coordinators

October 22, 1997
Polaris Board Room
Bedford Institute of Oceanography
Dartmouth, N.S.

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Abstract

Officers of CSAS and RAP coordinators (or their equivalents) met at BIO on October 22, to review science peer review and advisory issues for 1997. All Regions were represented. Progress on all action items from the 1996 meeting were reviewed.

Main topics for discussion from 1997 included:

- improvements to CSAS website & publication products.
- copyright issues regarding art and maps for SSRs
- proposed major changes to process in Maritime, Central & Arctic, and Pacific Regions
- review and approval process for SSRs
- timeliness of preparation and archival of Research Documents
- process for preparation and approval of Overviews
- national or zonal workshops for remainder of fiscal year and 1998/99
- activities, mandates and reporting of national committees
- status and reporting process for this group
- long term schedules for assessments

Résumé

Des agents du SCES et les coordonnateurs du Processus consultatif régional (ou leurs équivalents) se sont réunis à l'IOB le 22 octobre, afin de réviser le processus d'examen par les pairs et les questions de consultation pour 1997. Toutes les régions étaient représentées. Les participants ont fait le point sur l'avancement des dossiers découlant de la réunion de 1996.

Les débats de la réunion de 1997 ont porté sur les sujets principaux suivants :

- amélioration du site web du SCES et des produits pour publication;
- questions de droits d'auteur concernant les dessins et les cartes des RES;
- principaux changements proposés au processus dans les régions Maritimes, Centre et Arctique, et Pacifique;
- processus d'examen et d'approbation des RES;
- délais de préparation et d'archivage des documents de recherche;
- processus de préparation et d'approbation des aperçus;
- ateliers nationaux ou de zone pour le reste de l'exercice financier et pour 1998-1999;
- activités, mandats et rapports des comités nationaux;

situation et processus de présentation de rapports pour ce groupe-ci; calendriers d'évaluations à long terme.

The Regional Coordinators of the stock assessment review processes met at Bedford Institute of Oceanography on 22 October 1997. Attendees are listed in Appendix I. The agenda (Appendix II) distributed prior to the meeting was modified and adopted.

I: REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM 1996 MEETING

The meeting reviewed progress on the action items from the 1996 meeting of RAP coordinators, as recorded in Canadian Stock Assessment Proceedings Series 97/3.

A. [*The Coordinator of CSAS to collate proposed schedules of assessment reviews within all Regions. Headquarters Science officers will transmit the proposed schedules to FRCC for discussion, and discuss them with Fisheries Operations in Headquarters*] Several meetings and discussions have been held. A long term schedule, with not all stocks receiving full analytical treatment annually, has been agreed to in principle, and is on the agenda for this meeting for discussion.

B: [Discussions of assessment schedules with FRCC and Regional fisheries managers should address inter-annual schedule] The DG FOSD has discussed these concerns with the FRCC. No coordinators reported problems of this sort in 1997.

C: [*Senior Science managers to review DFO staff appointed as contacts for FRCC committees. DG FOSD will propose to the Chairman of the FRCC that requests for DFO presentations on topics be channeled through the DG's office. The DG will discuss appropriate spokespersons with the Coordinator of CSAS and Science Directors. When appropriate, more than one presenter will be proposed, to ensure the FRCC receives a balanced viewpoint. The Coordinator CSAS will work with Regional RAP coordinators and Science managers to establish a process where material presented to the FRCC by individuals is distributed for information to other staff.*] There has been little action on circulating information presented to the FRCC by individuals to other DFO staff. It will be noted for action next year.

D: [*The Coordinator CSAS is to work with regional science managers and RAP coordinators, to develop Terms of Reference for this Committee, and get it operational in 1997. The Coordinator CSAS is also to review Terms of Reference and operating practices for SSSC and FOC, in light of the expanding mandate of the process.*]
Draft Terms of Reference have been submitted for approval, but no explicit approvals have been received. It is unclear whether approval of Terms of Reference for CSAS and its committees should come from National Science Directors or from the DG-FOSD.

ACTION: CSAS Committee Chairs will review draft terms of reference and update them if necessary. These will be presented to either a meeting of NSDC or to the DG-FOSD, depending on which channel is preferred by the Branch.

E: [*In late winter of 1997 there will be a zonal RAP of herring assessments. Herring stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Scotian Shelf, and Gulf of Maine will be assessed. The Newfoundland Region herring assessments conducted in fall of 1996 will be tabled for review of possible harvesting strategies, given the assessed stock status.*]
Herring Workshop was held in March 1997 , and workshop proceedings are available as Proceedings Series 97/9.

F: [*The Coordinator CSAS is to discuss with science managers and Regional RAP coordinators the value of a zonal meeting or a conference call on snow crab. Pacific Region should be included in these discussions.*] There was an Atlantic Study Group on Management Strategies for snow crab, whose report is available as CSAS Proceedings series 97/16. With several issues regarding management advice addressed, the need for a ZAP on snow crab has lessened.

G: [*The Coordinator CSAS will prepare and forward a draft agenda for snow crab and request for contributions to DFO Science Directors by Nov. 22. Regional RAP coordinators will return comments by 2 December.*] The Workshop was held in March 1997. The workshop proceedings are available as Proceedings Series 97/6.

H: [*CSAS staff will review the 1994 document "A Renewed Process for Assessment of Atlantic Stocks" in light of changes to the Department since 1994, and produce a revised draft for comment by Science Directors and RAP coordinators by the end of the calendar year. The Secretariat will also develop and provide to Regional RAP coordinators and science managers a list of the things the Secretariat requires of the Regions through an operational year.*] A draft of suggestions for revision to the 1994 document was submitted to science directors, and feedback was received. The process is still in evolution, particularly with regard to inclusion of Regions outside the Atlantic Zone. Regional processes have also been changing, particularly in the Maritimes Region.

ACTION: The 1994 document will be reviewed, suggestions for modifications developed, and the draft revisions will be circulated to Regional coordinators for comment. When a draft of a new framework document has been developed from the Regional input, it will be presented to a meeting of NSDC by the Coordinator of CSAS.

The target date for the new document is the first half of 1998.

I: [*The Coordinator of CSAS will raise both of these issues (how peer review of habitat issues are dealt with and how management approaches are evaluated) with Atlantic Zone Science Directors and the meeting on November 15.*] Discussed at the AZSD meeting. There was support for a structured peer review and advisory process for habitat issues. The process is being discussed. Regional Rap coordinators reported little involvement in developing RAP processes for habitat issues, except in Pacific where the RDG has requested a Habitat Subcommittee of PSARC be developed, and

in the Maritimes, where a RAP Habitat Committee has been formed and has been active since 1996.

J: [*Regional RAP coordinators will ensure non-DFO participants continue to be requested to agree to treat RAP discussions as completely confidential until the SSRs are released. In IQ fisheries, RAP participants must agree not to buy or sell quota between the time of receipt of RAP documents and public release of the SSRs. RAP coordinators will continue to allow participation by invitation only, acknowledging that particularly when industry organizations fund assessment activities, their suggestions for representation should be considered carefully.*] A draft letter of invitation, noting these matters, was drafted and circulated by CSAS. The draft letter has been used in some instances, and not in others. In discussion it was clear that the invitation process was becoming quite informal in some instances, and this might eventually lead to problems. It was agreed that written invitations should be the general rule. Outside participants always should be informed of the operating procedures of RAP meetings, even when there are few mechanisms for enforcement of the confidentiality provisions, for example.

K: [*The CSAS Secretariat will prepare a single common format for the first page of all SSRs, and provide the template to Regional administrative staff prior to commencement of 1997 assessments.*] Templates have been prepared, circulated, and appear to be working well.

L: [*CSAS staff will develop a proposal for numbering all SSRs at the national level, and circulate the proposal to Regional coordinators for comment by the end of 1996. Regional staff are invited to suggest approaches for numbering to the CSAS staff over the next weeks.*] A permanent numbering system has been adopted, with input both from Regions and Headquarters.

M: [*To improve efficiency of mailings, Regional coordinators are asked to update their mailing lists and forward a copy electronically to the Assistant Coordinator CSAS.*] The mailing lists were coordinated as recommended.

ACTION: To keep Regional and Headquarters mailing lists up-to-date and well coordinated, the CSAS will send a copy of its full mailing list to all Regional coordinators at the beginning of each calendar year. Regional coordinators are to review the lists and advise the Secretariat of any changes which are appropriate. CSAS requires up-to-date mailing lists for documents that need zonal or national distribution. Additional changes to mailing lists can be sent to CSAS throughout the year.

N: [*Regional coordinators are to discuss possible videos in 1997 with their staff and Science Directors, and send a short list of proposed topics to CSAS by December 20. Selection and planning for production will be given high priority thereafter.*] A video is planned to follow the zonal cod assessments in January-February 1998, and Maritimes Region has prepared a video on the Southern Gulf groundfish. This will be circulated

prior to the November 1997 FRCC meetings. As well, it will be preparing a Scotian Shelf groundfish video and one on the oceanographic conditions as well, both for distribution in 1998. Other videos are not planned at this time.

O: [*Atlantic Science Directors will be alerted to the need for a significantly greater commitment of Informatics support to SeaLane.*] SeaLane has evolved substantially in the past year. As well, a number of the Regions are developing their own websites, linked to that of CSAS. There remains a need for informatics support for websites in the Regions and in Headquarters.

P: [*The Director, Fisheries Research will try to obtain copies of all three documents (on emerging fisheries from the FRCC, Maritimes, and Pacific Regions), and circulate them among attendees.]* These documents were circulated.

II: UPDATES OF ACTIVITIES

Update of CSAS Activities

The CSAS Website (*http://csas.meds.dfo.ca*) has been substantially revamped. There are new sections, including a "What's New?" section, and pointers to other Regional and international websites. For example the NAFO SSRs are presently available indirectly through the CSAS site. Around 4000 hits are being made per month to HTML files, which equals roughly 1000 different HTML documents (i.e. 1000 different SSRs). The PDF files reached a high of 750 hits in June 1997 and are being steadily used by clients. It is expected that there will be another pulse of interest in the fall, when new SSRs are loaded. A searchable Access database with all CAFSAC research document lists from 1977 on, will be available soon.

The timeliness of submission of 1996 research documents are not at all efficient. Several 1996 series documents were not received until September 1997; as of October 1997, only about half of the 1997 documents have been received. There is a need to place a deadline on submission of these documents. It was noted that hte timely production of these documents is critical as the Proceedings do not generally include the technical background of the SSR. Timeliness of completion and submission of Research Documents will be picked up later in the agenda.

Interest was expressed in having the list of documents in the Proceedings Series on the Website. After discussion this was agreed to.

ACTION: The Proceedings Series list is to be placed on the CSAS Website.

A number of concerns were raised about the use of copyright clip art in the SSRs on the website, where they can be downloaded and used by all visitors. It was agreed that there is need for a national clipart library, possibly curated by CSAS. Several individuals reported on Regional initiatives to build up libraries of computer art and

images. The photo archiving exercise at BIO was of note. It has a website which ultimately could be either used as the archive or linked to an NHQ maintained archive.

ACTION: Regional coordinators will acquire candidate images from Regional sources, which must be copyright free (or have blanket permission by the copyright holder) and usable by anyone. CSAS will be the archive for the images, will establish formats and criteria for what is in the library, and maintain a catalog to facilitate access to the images as needed.

CSAS will also check if we can use the pictures in the posters circulated by the department.

The was also noted that maps and departmental logos should be included in the clipart library.

ACTION: Regional coordinators will tell CSAS what maps are needed. CSAS will work with national GIS experts to get necessary files made accessible.

In discussion of interactions with the FRCC, their planned workshop on Ecosystem Management was raised. In discussion it was noted that there was concern last year about the process to ensure appropriate representation at FRCC activities. It was also noted that Maritimes Region has struck a RAP Ecosystem Dynamics Working Group, which is preparing a background document that may be appropriate for this workshop. The issue of "Ecosystem Management" is relevant to all Regions. For example, in Pacific Region, Science Branch has been instructed to undertake an "ecosystem assessment" of the Strait of Georgia. Because recommendations of the FRCC on this topic may be influential on Ministerial decisions, there should be efforts to ensure a national perspective is presented at this workshop.

ACTION: The letter requesting participants, drafted by Ken Drinkwater, will be transmitted to the DG-FOSD. Rice and Rivard will alert the DG to the relevance of input from all Regions.

The meeting also received an update on the FRCC Study Group on the Precautionary Approach. A number of activities are underway but are not expected to bear fruit before spring of 1998. The group agreed on the need to follow this initiative closely, but the main inputs to FRCC on implementation of the precautionary approach should be after the NAFO workshop on the subject.

It was also noted that some FRCC members have a strong interest in Marine Protected Areas (MPA). They should be kept informed of any Regional or CSAS workshop on the topic, and we should be prepared for involvement in activities they undertake as well.

Regional Updates on Activities & Issues

LAURENTIAN Region reported that the RAP process is generally running smoothly. The major issues at present focus on industry participation. There are potential problems of perception of conflict of interest, even though there have not been actual problems of that nature at the RAP meetings. There are also language issues when it is appropriate to have industry participation from both the Quebec North Shore and the west coast of Newfoundland. There are individuals who prefer to use one of the two official languages, and there is generally not money for simultaneous translation at the RAP meetings. Distance and travel costs from those areas are also considerations.

NEWFOUNDLAND also reported that the RAP process is going along well. Secretaries dislike the template for SSRs because of technical difficulties in using it, but not the template itself.

For the CENTRAL AND ARCTIC Region, everything with RAP, SSRs etc. is new, and the major issues are just getting a working knowledge of how the whole process works. The Region now has an Arctic Stock Assessment section of 8 people, who are working out how RAP meets the specific Regional needs, and how it fits into their work. Central and Arctic is in a different situation that the other Regions. There are several land claim areas where the management boards are full partners in the formal sense. There is a legal as well as functional need to bring co-management boards into the review process. The Boards have made it clear they want meaningful involvement in the approval process as well as the review process. The Co-management Boards interpret their role more in the production of integrated management plans than in evaluating stock status, and this needs to be built into the process as well. There is also a crucial need to develop list of stocks to be done through RAP, and a schedule for these stocks.

The PACIFIC Region reported that the major development is the changes in actors. There is a new RDG, a new Head of Stock Assessment Division, and a new Chair of PSARC. The Chair of PSARC is now regional coordinator of the RAP process, instead of the Head of the Stock Assessment Division. The new RDG has a much more ecosystems view of the world, and is laying out some new views on role of stock assessment and fishery advisory tasks. The BC - CANADA MOU, establishing a Pacific FRCC, is expected to mean many additional changes to process. Federal - Provincial Committees are currently developing Terms of Reference, guidelines, etc. for the PFRCC. The MOU contains a commitment to Provincial and stakeholder participation in PSARC process, but details will remain uncertain until the PFRCC procedures are finalized.

The Terms of Reference for PSARC were redone in 1996, but they are still in draft form. It is unlikely they will be approved until the PFRCC process is outlined. PSARC recommended and the RDG and the Regional Management Executive Committee agreed to have a Habitat Subcommittee of PSARC, and this is being set up between the Chair of PSARC and the Head of the Marine Environment and Habitat Science

Division. The Chair of PSARC also went through the sequence of subcommittee meetings for 1997.

The MARITIMES Region reported a very busy year. The Hutchings *et al.* article had big impact regionally, leading to a formal review of RAP activities with meetings at the three Regional sites (BIO, SABS, and GFC).
At the meetings, comments were directed at communications policy and many other topics, as well as RAP. There was a general feeling that RAP is better than CAFSAC, but the technical review component is not as strong as it had been in CAFSAC. Staff feel there is not time at the meeting to go through assessments in detail. Both the meetings and the potential for follow-up work are caught in a time crunch relative to FRCC consultations. These meetings will lead to revisions in the RAP for the Region. Proposed changes are being documented in the draft report which was circulated at the meeting. Components of the draft document were discussed during this meeting. There was also a lot of criticism of Ottawa involvement in approval process for SSRs. Many people feel their RES DOCs and the SSRs are their own stock and assessment, and not even a product of the RAP. This view is especially strongly held in some invertebrate groups.

III: REVIEW OF SSRS

Editorial Considerations

It was agreed that there remain serious problems of technical jargon and poor grammar in many SSRs forwarded to Ottawa for approval. This is an issue of writing style. The objective is to make the documents become clearer and simpler for the general public; there is a need to train those who write SSRs to keep this in mind.

It was also noted that many SSRs have suffered from problems of omission of too much basic biological information on growth, maturity, etc., and inclusion of graphs which aren't readable when printed. In general the presentation of historic time series needs to be better and clearer. From the discussion several action items were highlighted:

ACTION: RAP coordinators have accountability for ensuring editorial content of SSRs is high before the documents ever leave the Region. Drafts of all SSRs are to be sent to the Assistant Coordinator, CSAS, who will either have a look at the language personally, or coordinate a reading by an appropriate officer in Headquarters. Feedback to the Regional RAP coordinator is to address only clarity and editorial content, and to be provided quickly (target turn-around of two working days).

ACTION: CSAS will select a few exemplar SSRs and editorial comments, and circulate these to Regional RAP coordinators, who may add additional comments. The Regional coordinators are to provide full editorial feedback to staff on a sample of these SSRs illustrating how they can be improved.

Approval Process

There was a long discussion of the approval process. It was acknowledged that in the vast majority of cases, the suggestions for revision contained in the Approval memos from the ADM addressed exclusively editorial issues, particularly use of technical jargon in the SSRs. Nonetheless, as long as a formal approval by Ottawa is required, it was thought that there would remain a perception of vulnerability to interference in the process. Many of these issues had been discussed in a conference call in mid-September, and the CSAS Coordinator reported on progress at implementing actions agreed to on the conference call.
Major points of the conference call include:

- Approval of SSRs should be conducted Regionally, although Headquarters would have an opportunity to advise on editorial issues, and Briefing Notes would continue to be submitted to Headquarters in advance of release of SSRs. After long discussion it was clear that there would be no single model for how Regions would approve SSRs.
- If there were multiple interpretations of specific analyses, or of overall stock status, supported by scientific information, the alternative interpretations would be included in the SSR, with a brief presentation of the scientific information consistent and inconsistent with each interpretation. However, the SSRs themselves would not contain minority statements written by individuals.
- The Proceedings of each RAP would include minority or dissenting opinions of any Individuals who wished to submit them. These would be included exactly as received.
- The Proceedings of each RAP would include some treatment of analyses or interpretations which were considered by the RAP and rejected, along the key reason(s) for rejecting the analyses or interpretation.

It is expected that the Minister will announce soon that the approval and release of SSRs will be done at the Regional level. Preparation is required for this.

ACTION: RAP coordinators are to discuss with their Science Directors and other staff the details of the process for approval and release within their respective Region. As soon as a process is agreed to in a Region, a memo describing it should be sent to the Coordinator, CSAS. To facilitate sharing ideas, CSAS will copy each memo to RAP coordinators in the other Regions.

ACTION: CSAS is to organize a method to conduct an annual review of the quality of SSRs, including a postmortem on the quality of SSRs produced to date.

This review may use expertise in Communications Branch, other fisheries advisory bodies, and public clients, as well as DFO Science staff.

There was also a discussion of an appropriate process for approval of Overview SSRs and SSRs arising from ZAPs or meetings of the national committees coordinated by CSAS. The following principles were agreed to:

- If an SSR applies to a single Region approval follows Regional practice, regardless of the type of meeting which reviewed the material in the SSR.
- Regions are accountable for content of SSRs produced in own Region.
- If the SSR applies to more than one region, approval is coordinated centrally by CSAS, but will require approval by every affected Region.

- Approval of zonal or national Overviews will be coordinated by the CSAS office. The type of involvement of Regional coordinators will depend on the nature of the overview, but as a rule, RAP coordinators in all Regions covered by the Overview will be consulted.

The implementation of Regional approvals for SSRs creates the need for a process to ensure final versions of SSRs are sent to the Secretariat in both paper and electronic form prior to Regional release. This is to ensure that the SSRs are available on the website or by inquiry to CSAS, as soon as they are released.

ACTION: Such a process has to be implemented regionally, and Regional RAP coordinators are alerted to the need to put such a process in place. This should be done in close coordination with the Assistant Coordinator, CSAS.

It was noted that in some regions, the need for translation will have to be taken into consideration.

In the discussion of the need to ensure electronic copies of SSRs are sent to CSAS quickly, it was noted that presently there are some problems getting HTML files together for some SSRs. However, the PDF versions of the files are being turned around quickly. The HTML files are done in the Regions, and supported there. The PDF files are archival, read-only, and kept in Ottawa.

It was also noted that there are staff capacity and training needs within Regions which needs to be addressed, with regard to preparation of these files. It was also noted that there is potentially significant value in having staff who manage the websites communicating with each other.

ACTION: CSAS will coordinate exchange of an e-mailing list and phone list of the administrative staff who maintain the Regional websites and prepare the final files of the SSRs.

Content of SSRs

The need for preparing SSRs with similar discrete sections was stressed, as was the need for completeness of material on topics within each section. Clients ask for consistency in organization across SSRs, and to be able to always find the same

information in the same place. Because a Status Report on a stock is intended to replace all earlier versions when it is released, much biological information may be carried over from one SSR to its successor.

Some regional coordinators stressed the client interest in having the main points easier to find. There are the points which are included in the Briefing Note prepared for the Minister, when SSRs were released.

ACTION: CSAS will make the most useful format a part of the consultation with clients on the quality and clarity of SSRs. The deadline of the full review is the end of this calendar year. RAP Coordinators to forward names of the Communications staff for consultation.

Questions were also raised about the proper form for citation of SSR, and the difficulty of cataloguing SSRs in libraries when the number does not include the year.

ACTION: Starting in 1998, the year of the SSR will be added to the identification number, and be in parenthesis. The Assistant Coordinator, CSAS will consult with departmental librarians, and notify Regional Coordinators of the proper citation of SSRs, RES DOCs, and Proceedings.

IV: REVIEW OF RESEARCH DOCUMENTS

The main issue with Research Documents is the continuing problem of tardiness in preparation. Few are received sooner than a couple of months after a RAP has adjourned, and a number are still outstanding at the end of a calendar year. For DFO staff, completion of revisions to Working Papers within the 4-6 week timeframe is realistic, as long as there is line management support for seeing that the revisions are done. Depending on the Region, either Division Heads or RAP coordinators must understand that their responsibilities include follow-up with authors of Working Papers, to ensure the Research Documents are completed and forwarded to CSAS. This task includes reporting overdue Research Documents to regional line managers for action.

The issue of late (or non-existent) completion of Research Documents is a particular problem with university staff and non-DFO employees who contribute Working Papers at RAP sessions. Although the Working Papers may be important to the final decisions on stock status, DFO has little leverage to get others to complete revisions to the Working Papers, as requested by a RAP.

The group had a long discussion of this issue, but agreed that there was no institutional solution to the problem.

ACTION: In invitations to non-DFO staff to participate in RAPs, it should be made clear that if one tables a Working Paper, one may be asked to revise it afterwards, and the revisions are mandatory.

There was also a discussion of how Working Papers themselves should be handled after the meeting, including responsibilities of authors and RAP coordinators under ATIP. It was agreed as policy that:

ACTION: Working Papers must be kept for a minimum of 6 months after the RAP meeting, by RAP coordinator. After that time each Region may apply their own procedures to further custodianship of them.

There was some discussion of deadlines for Research Documents. The core principle remains that every important statement in an SSR must be backed up in material either in a CSAS Research Document or a primary publication cited by a backing Research Document. It was acknowledged that the process must remain flexible, because some Research Documents are crucial as documentation of the reasons for conclusions about stock status. It would not be appropriate to exclude them from the series because a deadline was missed. However, to accommodate cataloging and preparation of Annual Reports, it was agreed that:

ACTION: The Research Document series for one calendar year is closed March 31st of the next calendar year.

Research Documents received after that date are assigned a number from the next year's series. This may result in some gaps in the sequence of annually assigned numbers.

It was also pointed out that the absence of logos on the Research Document Series does not comply with the requirements for government publications.

ACTION: The Assistant Coordinator will look into the requirements for government publications and send out new versions of the template for 1998 if necessary.

V: REVIEW OF THE PROCEEDINGS SERIES

The group agreed that the Proceedings Series should continue to be open to reports from a variety of kinds of meetings, as long the meeting was sponsored (or co-sponsored) by DFO Science, and was relevant to stock assessment or the scientific review and advisory processes. The proceedings of all RAP, ZAP, and NAP meetings, and the proceedings all meetings of national committees must be submitted to the series.

Because of the diversity of meetings, the format of Proceedings would have to remain flexible. However some minimum standards were agreed to,. All contributions to the CSAS Proceedings Series should include:

- Agenda*
- Participants list*
- Summary of discussion on each agenda item (including minority opinions)
- A list of all Working Papers & resultant Research Documents tabled, and an abstract or summary of each prepared by the author(s)
- Written reviewers comments* or a summary prepared by the reviewer on Working Papers, if received
- A list of Research Recommendations, if any are generated
- A list of Management Recommendations, if any are generated

* Likely to appear as Annexes

ACTION: CSAS will prepare a Guide to chairs on what should be in the proceedings series.

VI: REVIEW OF OVERVIEWS

It is expected that there will continue to be geographic overviews across species groups. Many will be prepared Regionally, as they are now. The practice of having separate Overviews for Oceanography and for living marine resources works well, and should be retained. When Overviews are prepared within a single Region, and address stocks within a single Region, approval will follow Regional process. Overview documents for the Gulf of St. Lawrence address two Regions, and the Regional Directors of Science for Maritimes and Laurentian Regions both must concur on the approval process.

The meeting agreed that whenever there is a Zonal Assessment meeting for a particular species or issue, an Overview should be prepared on the results of the ZAP. This is what is being done for redfish and is being planned for cod in 1998. Zonal or national Overviews may also be prepared when special needs are identified, even if there has not been a formal ZAP meeting. Special groups may be struck to prepare these. Once changes are implemented to the SSR approval process, approval for Zonal and National Overviews will be coordinated by the Coordinator of CSAS. The diversity of potential Zonal and National Overviews makes it inappropriate to specify a single approval structure, but in principle RAP coordinators for all Regions covered by the Overview are to have a chance for review and input to its content.

VII: ZONAL AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Two ZAPs have been planned for fiscal year 1997/98; one for the cod stocks under moratoria, and the other for redfish. The cod ZAP will be in January 1998, and detailed plans will be made for the ZAP a special meeting on October 23-24, 1997. The redfish ZAP is in response to a request from the FRCC, which holds consultations on many of the redfish stocks together. Although there is no official policy to always review assessments of all redfish stocks together, it is expected that the practice will continue

as long as the FRCC continues in the way it handles redfish. None of the Atlantic coordinators reported serious problems with the zonal approach to redfish assessment reviews, although these was a reported desire in the Maritimes Region to eventually repatriate the Unit 3 assessment.

With regard to national or zonal workshops an earlier poll of Regional Science Directors had identified a list of several workshops with widespread interest and support. However, at this time there is no budget available for organizing the workshops, and few Regional staff have funds available to travel to national workshops. This has meant that none have held, nor are any being organized at this time. However, in case circumstances change, candidate topics for National workshops were reviewed and are:

- Scientific Evaluation of Fisheries Management Aspects of MPAs - to be of greatest value, this workshop should be held before June 1998. The focus would be on setting up an appropriate process and criteria for conducting evaluations of MPAs proposed for fisheries management objectives, and not on the science or merits of MPAs themselves. This has been discussed and has received support from the national coordinator of the DFO MPA program - Supported very strongly as urgent need.

- Atlantic Lobster Assessment, Management, and current dynamics - There are concerns that the stock may be in decline after recent high levels. The workshop would address what is precautionary at this time, and include a review of management strategies. Noting that the FRCC recently completed a review of lobster, it is important to discuss with the Senior Program and Policy Advisor on Invertebrates whether a workshop on lobster at this time would be redundant.

- Pandalus shrimp - There are still many questions about stock dynamics, assessment approaches and management strategies. The upcoming NAFO Symposium is not expected to address all the issues of interest in the Regions. Strong support remained for a meeting on assessment methods & management strategies, most likely sometime after the NAFO Symposium.

- Fishing on Lower trophic levels - There are many issues associated with this topic, and it was suggested such a workshop also consider conservation aspects of harvesting pre-recruits and transplant/escapees. Strong support.

- Assessment and Advisory Aspects of Low Marine Survival of Salmon- This is a new proposal, in response to present concerns about extremely low marine survivals of salmon on both coasts. It was acknowledged that there are many science meetings discussing the possible causes of low survival, but there is a need to review how marine survival is currently handled in assessments, if there is room to improve treatment in models, and if scientific advice takes adequate cognizance of the present low survival rates. A meeting on marine survival of Atlantic salmon is planned for early February in Moncton already. It was suggested that perhaps

these additional themes could be added to that meeting, and staff from the Pacific Region included in the meeting.

- Habitat Subcommittee - It was suggested that it might be appropriate to have a national workshop to discuss a possible RAP-type process for evaluation and development of advice on habitat issues. Regional RAP coordinators will discuss this idea with staff and managers in their Regions.

VIII: NATIONAL COMMITTEES

MARINE MAMMALS COMMITTEE

The draft Terms of Reference for the committee need approval by NSDC. There is also a need to define the relationship of national committee reviews to Regional reviews, particularly those done with Co-management Boards. The meeting agreed that as a general principle, the national committee performs the review of scientific issues, including traditional knowledge when it is available. When scientific advice on management issues is framed, it also should be done at the national meeting. Every effort should be made to get client involvement fully at the national meeting, which has financial implications. This will require further discussion, but this is scientifically the best approach. There was concern about the timing of the meeting. - November of 1997 may be too early to have some important work ready, whereas some other issues have already been dealt with at Regional meetings

ACTION: CSAS to work with the Chair of the NMMC to send out Terms of Reference to RDS & check on agenda for the November meeting.

FISHERIES OCEANOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

The Chairman expressed concern that there had been little feedback from Headquarters on whether the group is on the right track. FOC holds one meeting a year, where they deal with Environmental overviews & hold a joint theme session. FOC also monitors other general issues as they arise. FOC has also struck a few Working Groups on specific issues, including a WG on Growth & Environment, which will consider effects of temperature vs. density dependence in accounting for the charges in growth rates of Northwest Atlantic gadoids. There is Also as WG on environmental indices. The next meeting of FOC is at the end of February. The theme session wil be on Growth & Reproduction. In the ensuing discussion it was suggested that there be a Zonal monitoring program review conducted by FOC. It was also noted that the cod-mortality HPP (High Priority Project) workshop in March is NOT well known. This concern led to a discussion of making the Workshop more under the coordinating umbrella of CSAS.

It was further suggested that CSAS have a more active role in true for ALL the HPPs relevant to stock assessment and marine ecosystem issues. It was suggested that CSAS coordinate the review of scientific products, and oversee closing down projects

and communication of products, including, where relevant having HPPs make presentations at FOC and other committees.

It was agreed that there is a need for a Western version of FOC. The Pacific RAP Coordinator is getting Terms of Reference from the Chair of FOC. There should also be joint meetings of the Atlantic and Pacific FOCs every few years, to share ideas and progress and address national issues.

STATISTICS, SURVEYS, AND SAMPLING COMMITTEE
There was uncertainty about the status of this committee. The Maritime Regional coordinator will check with the Chair of SSSC about meeting this calendar year - when it is scheduled and when the agenda will be sent out. Both Central and Arctic and Pacific Regions expressed strong interest in this committee. It was agreed:

ACTION: The chairpersons should send any committee announcement to the Regional Coordinators of all Regions.

- There was substantial discussion of potential topics for SSSC meetings, including:
- Assessment methods for data poor species
- Risk of fishing on forage species
- Spatial processes and assessments
- Precautionary Approach - (acknowledging a need to coordinate with FRCC & NAFO workshops)
- Ecosystem Management (jointly with FOC)
- Quantitative inclusion of oceanographic variables in assessments (joint with FOC)

The group discuss how agenda are set for Committee meetings.
The practice so far has been self-identification of issues by the committees. It was proposed:

ACTION: To make the Committee Chairs members of this group, and have them make an annual report at this meeting. Regional RAP coordinators would come to the annual meeting prepared with regional issues which should go to these Committees.

It was also proposed that :

ACTION: This group will report annually to the NSDC, and provide feedback to it on what has been achieved by RAP, as well as what is needed to be done.

With this reporting process in place, both RAP and the national committees may get more RDS support for attendance and preparation of work for the committees.

With regard to external participation at the national committee meetings, the objective is the same at ZAP , NAP, and committees as at RAP. If DFO is serious about external

participation, particularly at zonal and national meetings, it needs to address the budgetary issue.

IX. LONG TERM SCHEDULE

The meeting endorsed the concept of conducting major assessments of many stocks every 3 years (or so), rather than annually. Stocks assessed on a periodic basis would include stocks where the biology of the species meant that status was unlikely to change greatly from one year to the next, and species where insufficient new information was expected to be acquired annually to justify annual reevaluations. It is understood that if there is a big signal in a key indicator of stock status, the stock will get a major assessment anyway, whether one is scheduled or not.

The agreement on periodic assessments led to a discussion of what gets released every interim year.

Three options were discussed:

1. Full assessment and new SSR annually
2. Full assessment and new SSR every x(often 3rd) year. In the interim
    a) new SSR with figures updated and new bit of text added, but receiving trivial review
    b) re-release of the old SSR with annex with updated figures only
    c) nothing released
3. One summary interim document of a couple of paragraphs and figures on each stock.

The group agreed on alternative 3. In future there will be summary status reports, one per geographic area, with all stocks that are not receiving full analytical assessments. Stocks will be included in the Summary Status Report only when asked for by some client body.

Stocks which are included will have 2-3 paragraphs and figures selected by RAP updated. The updated text and figures will be reviewed by RAP for that area. When a major assessment is conducted, the RAP will select which figures are to be updated annually and included in the summary status report.

X. REVIEW OF REGIONAL ISSUES

Several RAP coordinators contributed issues which had not been dealt with in the previous discussion.

MARITIMES

The group received a report on a developing joint CAN-US process for review of assessments of transboundary stocks. This proposal is included as Appendix III.

It was reported that the present schedule of assessments and FRCC consultations has left no window for preparation of communications products, such as videos, between end of RAP and beginning of consultation. The coordinator asked "What do senior managers want the Regions to do"; will "late" videos be of any value.

PACIFIC

The Regional coordinator reported a number of problems caused by uncertainty about the provisions which will be in the MOU being developed between the federal and provincial governments. Several aspects of the RAP process cannot be finalized until the final versions of the MOU and associated implementation documents are available.

Although inclusion of industry and outside experts is going smoothly in Herring and Groundfish, there are serious unresolved questions about how attendees for Salmon subcommittee meetings are selected.

Both of these issues must be addressed regionally.

NEWFOUNDLAND

The outstanding issue regarding Regional peer review is getting people in the Region to come and stay for the entire meeting, and getting people from outside to attend the RAPs organized Regionally.

LAURENTIAN

All major issues had been dealt with as part of this agenda. Communications during RAP meetings is sometimes a problem when outside participants differ in their working language. Simultaneous translation is extremely expensive, and cannot be considered a routine option of RAPs.

CENTRAL and ARCTIC

The newness of the RAP process and establishing workable relationships between RAP and the Regional Management Boards are the major issues, and were dealt with in previous agenda items.

The Chair thanked all participants for their time and useful contributions. The meeting adjourned at 18:00.

APPENDIX I

AGENDA
MEETING OF REGIONAL RAP COORDINATORS
22 October 1997
6th Floor Boardroom - Polaris Building - BIO

I - OPENING CEREMONIES

A. Greetings
B. Appointment of rapporteurs
C. Revisions & approval of agenda
D. Discussion of last ZAP meeting's Action Items and their results

II - RECENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. Update of CSAS activities
    Website
    SSR & Res. Docs - number, status, turn-around time
    Other issues
B. Update on CSAS / FRB meeting with FRCC and managers
C. Brief updates of changes from each Region.

III. DOCUMENTATION

A. Stock Status Reports
    Revised approval process
    Process to ensure SSRs reach website by new date of release
    Content of SSRs
        Consistency
        Quality control
B. Research Documents
    Timeliness of preparation & submission to CSAS
    Regional approval processes -
    Format / content
C. Proceedings
    Coverage of meetings
    Contents - diversity of opinion & documentation of debate
    Editorial review
    Quality control - accuracy checks
D. Overview SSRs
    What ones for 1997/98?
    Approval process
E. Videos & Decks
    February 1998 - Atlantic Groundfish
    Other videos?

Other media / public communications outlets and strategies?

IV. NATIONAL COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

A. Zonal / National Committees
    Marine Mammals
    Fisheries Oceanography
    Statistics, Surveys, & Sampling Committee
    Other needs for committees?
    Process for setting agendas & selecting chairs
B. Zonal / National Workshops
    Cod & Redfish ZAPs
    Pandalus shrimp NAP & Workshop on management approaches
    Precautionary Approach to New & Developing Fisheries
    Precautionary Approach to fisheries on lower trophic levels
    Stock assessment & fisheries management aspects of Marine Protected Areas
    Low marine survival of salmonids - implications for assessment & advice
C. Attendance at ZAPs, NAPs, Workshops & Committees
D. Other ways to increase exchange of expertise / innovations among Regions?

V. SCHEDULING ISSUES
A. Atlantic Zonal schedule - RAPs & release dates for SSRs & media products
    Rest of 1997 & 1998
    Long-term schedule
B. Incorporating Central & Arctic and Pacific schedules

VI. REGIONAL ISSUES
A. Pacific
B. Central & Arctic
C. Laurentian
D. Maritimes
    Joint Canada - US process
    Fax on Demand service
    Gulf of St. Lawrence video
E. Newfoundland

APPENDIX II

Participants:

J. Rice - Chair (NCR)
C. Matula (NCR)
D. Rivard (NCR)
D. Gascon (LAU)
J. Morgan (NFL)
S. Cousins (C&A)
M. Stocker (PAC)
R. O'Boyle (MAR)
K. Drinkwater (MAR)

APPENDIX III

A Joint Canada/USA Stock Assessment Process for Transboundary Resources

Background

Since the termination of ICNAF in 1977, Canada and the USA have independently developed peer review processes for their stock assessments. In Canada, in late 1992, the Canadian Atlantic Fisheries Scientific Advisory Committee (CAFSAC) was disbanded and the Regional Advisory Process (RAP) put in its place. RAP in the Maritimes Region currently provides advice on about 120 marine and freshwater finfish, shellfish and marine plant resources in the DFO Maritimes Region. In the Northeast Region of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) series was initiated in 1985. The SAW process currently provides advice on about 44 marine finfish and shellfish resources in the Northeast Region of NMFS.

Collaboration between Canada and the USA on stock assessments and related research has been strong. Regular scientific meetings are held to co-ordinate joint research programs and facilitate inter-lab communication. Protocols for routine data exchange, particularly commercial and survey, have been established and joint work on assessment related issues is common. Finally, participation in each other's peer review process is routine.

The 1996 Canada/USA Scientific Discussions noted that it would be desirable to conduct joint assessments of the Georges Bank groundfish stocks during the 1997 assessment cycle. Thus in April 1997, scientists from Canada and the USA combined efforts to prepare assessments of Georges Bank cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder. The peer review of these assessments was subsequently conducted first by RAP in Canada and then by the SAW Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) in the USA. Upon completion of the 1997 process, it was evident that there would be efficiencies realised by eliminating the duplication in the peer review process. This would also ensure that RAP and SARC would not produce divergent and inconsistent status reports on these stocks.

An outline (Appendix I) of a joint Canada/USA peer review process has been agreed to by both Canada and the USA. This report considers the detailed requirements of this process. Descriptions of the current peer review systems in Canada and the USA are given in Appendices II and III, respectively.

A Joint Peer Review Process

Stocks to Consider

There are a number of stocks that could be considered in a combined process. However, it would be wise to initially consider a subset of these to allow the incremental development of the new joint process. There has been close interaction between Canada and the USA on 5Z cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder. Thus, these stocks will initially be the principal focus of the new process, although other stocks in the Georges Bank - Gulf of Maine region may also be considered (e.g., Southern New

England yellowtail flounder, Gulf of Maine cod, Gulf of Maine - Georges Bank plaice, and Georges Bank winter flounder).

Structure of the Peer Review

Transboundary Assessment Working Group

A Transboundary Assessment Working Group (TAWG) will be established with membership composed of Canadian and USA scientists with a range of backgrounds and thus be multidisciplinary in nature. As well, industry participation from both countries will be encouraged. Its mandate will be to:

- analyze pertinent assessment information and produce stock assessments on identified stocks;
- formulate research recommendations which will lead to long-term improvements in the assessments.

Meetings of the TAWG will be arranged on a mutually agreed basis by both countries. The Chair of the TAWG will be determined by the RAP and SAW Chairs (see below).

Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee

A new Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC) will be established to peer review the stock assessments produced by the TAWG. The TRAC will be distinct from RAP and SARC. The Committee will be co-chaired by the Chairs of RAP and SAW who will be responsible for all logistical arrangements associated with TRAC meetings (e.g., dates, venue, participation).

The TRAC will be responsible for producing final, approved assessments and resulting documentation on the status of the transboundary resources.

Participation at the first TRAC meeting will be by invitation and will consist of no more than 8 - 9 Canadian and 8 - 9 USA representatives. The policy on participation at future meetings will be developed based on experience with the new process.

The TRAC will alternate its venue between Canada and the USA, with the host country serving as chair. The first meeting will be held in St. Andrew's, N.B., Canada 20-24 April 1998 and will be chaired by the RAP Chair.

TRAC Coordination

The RAP and SARC Chairs, with the guidance of their respective steering committees, will oversee the activities of the TRAC and TAWG.

Management Advice and Public Meetings

Once the TRAC review process has completed its deliberations, the results may be used by either country for fisheries management purposes as appropriate e.g., preparation of management advice in Canada by the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (FRCC) and in the USA by the SARC. Each country may conduct independent consultations with clients or disseminate the information to the public, informing the other side as required.

Documentation

Technical Documents

It is inadvisable to establish a new technical document series for resources reviewed by the TRAC. For 1998, when the TAWG and TRAC meetings will be held in Canada, the Canadian Stock Asssessment Secretariat (CSAS) Research Document series will be used to catalogue the technical reports produced by the TRAC and the TAWG. For 1999, when the meetings will be held in the USA, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Reference Document series might be used. A definitive policy for the cataloguing of future documents in either of the existing Canadian or USA series remains to be developed.

Stock Status/Advisory Documents

The purpose of the joint Canada/USA stock assessment process for transboundary resources will be only to produce and peer review assessments of stocks of mutual interest and not to prepare management advice. The assessment results from this joint process will be used by each country for their respective fisheries management purposes. The document series currently employed by each country at RAP and SARC meetings to convey a brief summary of stock status and management advice for individual stocks (i.e., the DFO Stock Status Report series in Canada and the SAW Advisory Report on Stock Status in the USA) will continue to be used for those purposes in each country because they serve different purposes and clients in each country. For stocks reviewed at a given TRAC meeting, the TRAC will produce final, approved documents for the Canadian SSR series. These documents, as well as the technical documents noted above, will provide the basis for management advice to be prepared by the SARC, following the TRAC meeting, and reported in the SAW Advisory Report on Stock Status.

Appendix I. Draft discussion document on a joint Canada/USA Stock assessment process for the transboundary fishery resources

It is proposed to establish a joint Canada/USA stock assessment and peer review process to provide both countries with information on the stock status of the transboundary fishery resources in the Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine area. This process would bring together all relevant expertise on these resources and would not only improve the efficiency of the current review process but also ensure consistency of analyses on stock status.

It is proposed to start the new process in April 1998 focusing on Georges Bank cod, haddock, and yellowtail. Once the process has been more fully developed, it could be expanded to include other transboundary resources.

It is proposed that:

1. RAP and SAW working groups or assessment teams prepare the technical assessment documents. They would conduct any necessary consultations with stakeholders, notifying the counterpart. When necessary and mutually acceptable, joint SAW/RAP working meetings may be arranged to resolve issues arising during analyses.

2. A new review committee (the Transboundary Resources Committee or TRC) be established to peer review the assessments and produce reports both on stock status and on the discussions of the committee. This body would be distinct from the current RAP Marine Fisheries Subcommittee and the SAW Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) but function in a similar manner to these bodies. The analyses would be reviewed, modified as required and the results interpreted during the scheduled TRC meeting. If modifications cannot be completed during the TRC meeting, and are of a nature that would substantially influence the interpretation, then the review would be deferred to a subsequent meeting of the TRC.

3. An executive subset of the RAP and SAW steering committees (plus additional individuals as required) meet to define the terms of reference, composition and schedule of the TRC.

4. All deliverables (e.g. status reports, meeting proceedings, list of reviewed technical documents for subsequent publication, etc.) expected of the TRC be submitted to the SAW/RAP Steering Committee for final vetting. Revisions may be suggested to improve clarity or additional work may be requested if the conclusions do not appear to be adequately supported.

5. Representatives from each country present results at respective industry, management and stakeholder consultations, notifying the counterpart.

It is proposed that upon approval of the approach, a small group, composed of the appropriate individuals from both nations, be struck to work out the details.

Appendix II. A Description of RAP

Organisation of RAP

The RAP consists of three groups that work together sequentially to produce stock assessments. These are provided to the FRCC which in turn provides the Minister of DFO with harvest advice (Figure II.1).

Assessment Teams

Teams of scientists are tasked to:

- analyse pertinent assessment information and produce stock assessments of indicated stocks;
- act as a forum for input on industry's observations, either through public pre-assessment data input meetings or through industry participation in the teams;
- make research recommendations on improvements to the analyses.

The teams are responsible for producing one or more working papers (and ultimately Research Documents) on the analysis, and a draft of the Stock Status Report (SSR). The working paper and draft SSR are tabled at a meeting of the Marine Fisheries Subcommittee for peer review.

Marine Fisheries Subcommittee

The Marine Fisheries Subcommittee is one of four standing Subcommittees of RAP. It is co-chaired by the Managers of the Marine Fish and Invertebrate Fisheries Divisions of the Maritime Region. Participation includes scientists and managers, both from the Maritimes Region and outside, external experts, and industry participants. Non-DFO participants are by invitation. All participants of the meeting contribute to the development of resource stock status. The mandate of the Subcommittee is to:

- peer review the working papers of the Assessment Teams and undertake dialogue on analytical options, conduct re-analyses, if necessary, to clarify issues, and send the assessment back to the Team/ Working Group if problems persist;
- modify the draft Stock Status Report based on the Subcommittee's discussions;
- act as a forum for input on industry's observations;
- formulate research recommendations additional to those of the Teams;
- produce the meeting's Proceedings which document the business of the meeting as well as the discussion.

The Chair of the Subcommittee is responsible for tabling the final Stock Status Report at a meeting of the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee and DFO Ottawa

The SSRs are reviewed by the RAP Steering Committee and DFO Ottawa for clarity and editorial comments. If there are substantive problems, the assessment is returned to the Subcommittee for resolution. The Ottawa approval process takes up to 15 working days after receipt of the SSR. As well, line management is briefed before the document is publicly released. The Chair of the Steering Committee also ensures that the SSRs are translated before public release. Once approved, the RAP Secretariat is responsible for the public distribution of the SSRs. With the approval of the SSRs, the peer review process is considered complete. It then becomes the responsibility of DFO line management to present the advice to industry and clients, the most important for groundfish being the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (FRCC).

RAP Schedule

RAP in the Maritimes Region has five major meetings per year - Gulf of St. Lawrence stocks in January, diadromous and freshwater stocks in February, scallop and herring stocks in March, Georges Bank groundfish stocks in April and Scotian Shelf stocks in October. This schedule is designed to allow usage of the most recent DFO survey in the assessment and to reduce the time between the assessment and the management plan to a minimum. Most advice is now provided in-year as a result of this schedule. All major assessments are conducted annually, with those of smaller stocks on a bi-annual or less frequent basis.

The RAP schedule for the Georges Bank stocks is given in Figure II.2. DFO conducts its Georges Bank survey in the last two weeks of February. Data preparation, ageing, and analysis is conducted between then and the 3rd week of April, when the RAP Marine Fisheries Subcommittee meets. The Steering Committee and Ottawa conduct their review of the SSRs during the last week of April. This is a fasttracked process due to the time constraints. The SSRs are approved in time for presentation to the FRCC at public meetings the first week of May. The FRCC makes recommendation to the Minister very shortly thereafter, with a management plan in place for the early June opening.

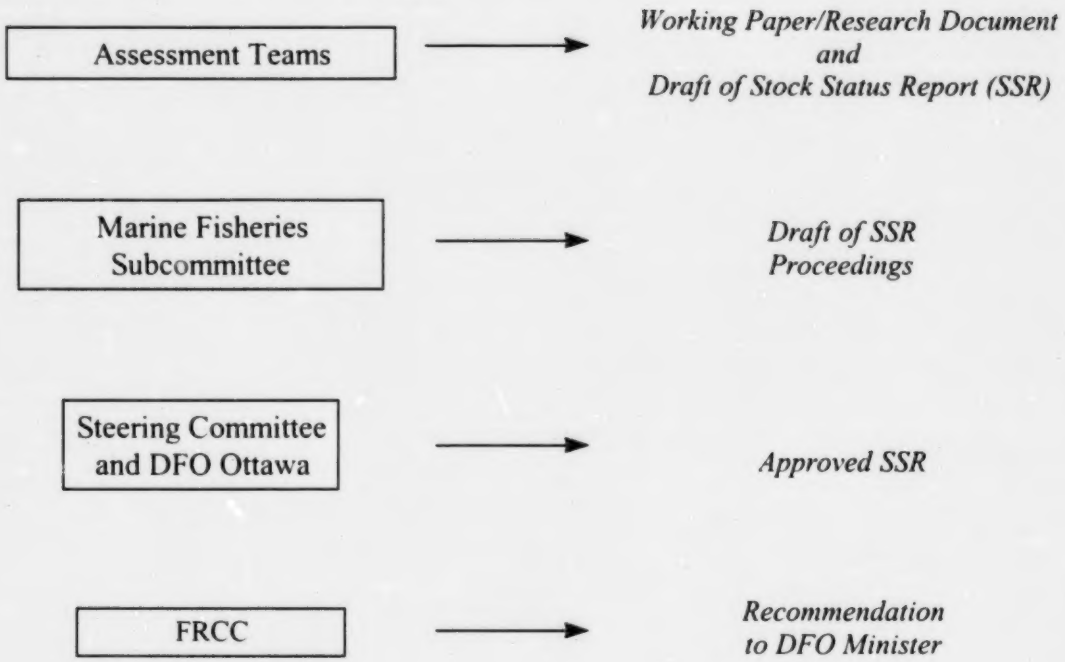

Figure II.1 Canadian RAP for Georges Bank Groundfish

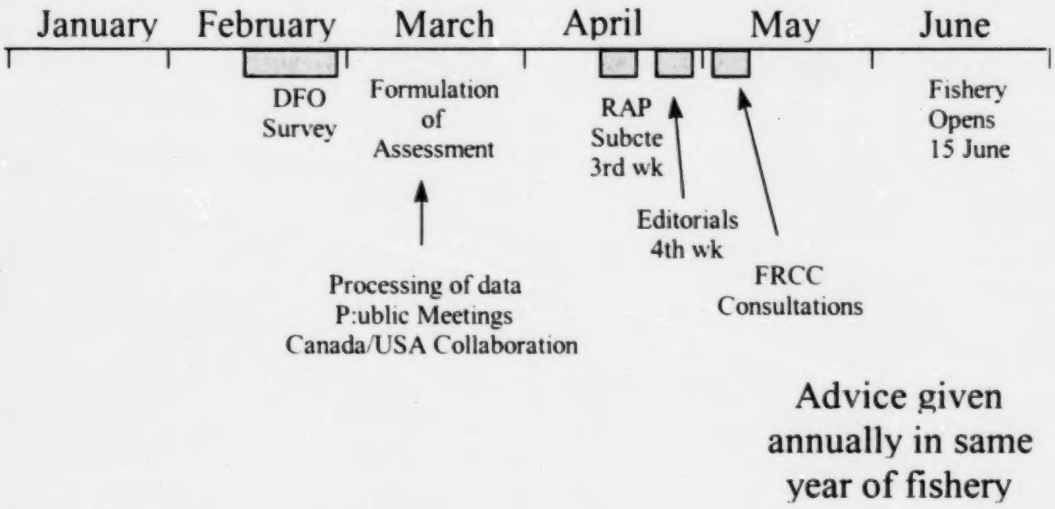

Figure II.2 RAP Schedule for Georges Bank Groundfish

Appendix III. Description of the SAW

Organisation of the SAW

The Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) process is a partnership of the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), NMFS Northeast Region (NER), New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) whose objective is to produce stock assessments, perform peer reviews of those assessments, and prepare scientific advice based on the peer-reviewed assessment results for fisheries management. The SAW process began in 1985 and has gradually evolved in structure and procedure to its present format of two SAW cycles per year. There are three stages to the process which are overseen by a Steering Committee (Figure III.1).

Working Groups

There are currently five standing Working Groups (Northern Demersal, Southern Demersal, Coastal/Pelagic, Invertebrate, and Assessment Methods), with each Group responsible for assessing assigned stocks. The Working Groups have no formal membership other than a Chair (generally from the NEFSC) appointed by the Steering Committee (see below). Meetings are attended mainly by NEFSC personnel whose assessment responsibilities or expertise coincide with the stocks being considered at a given meeting, but scientists from states, the two Council staffs, the ASMFC staff, universities, and Canada are welcome to attend. Fishing industry representatives are also welcome. Each Working Group has the following broad mandate:

- assembly of relevant input data;
- analysis of input data, performance of assessment, and investigation of analytical options;
- formulation of research recommendations;
- production of Working Paper (and ultimately the NEFSC Reference Document) and draft Advisory Report on Stock Status document for submission to SARC (see below);
- drafting of the appropriate section of the SARC Consensus Summary of Assessments document.

Depending on the stocks on the agenda for a particular SAW cycle, some or all of the Working Groups meet 1-2 months in advance of the SARC meeting to perform the assessments and prepare the necessary documentation. Either the Working Group Chair or the lead person for the specific assessment gives an oral presentation of the assessment at the SARC meeting.

Stock Assessment Review Committee

The Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) meets once during each SAW cycle (generally two each year, although three in 1997) usually in late June and late November or early December, with each meeting lasting five days. The SARC is chaired by the SAW Chair, and membership (at least 12 scientists which varies from meeting to meeting) includes four assessment experts chosen by the Chair from the NEFSC, two state people, one person each from the two Council staffs, one person from the NER, and generally at least one person each from Canada (DFO), academia, and another NMFS Fisheries Science Center. SARC meetings are open to the public and are frequently attended by members of the fishing industry, academia, state agencies, Councils, and environmental groups. However, only the SARC members are responsible for developing the Consensus Summary of Assessments and Advisory Report on Stock Status. The SARC has the following mandate:

- peer review Working Papers (containing assessments) submitted by Working Groups, undertake dialogue on analytical options and, if necessary, conduct re-analyses to clarify issues, and refer assessment back to Working Group if problems persist;
- determine management advice;
- formulate research recommendations;
- produce Consensus Summary of Assessments and Advisory Report on Stock Status.

The SAW Chair is responsible for editing and assembling the draft Consensus Summary of Assessments and the draft Advisory Report on Stock Status and forwarding these documents to the Steering Committee (see below) for their approval prior to their distribution to the Councils.

Public Review Workshop

The Public Review Workshop consists of two half-day sessions, one each held in conjunction with a NEFMC and MAFMC meeting, at which time the assessment results and management advice from the SARC are presented and explained by the SAW Chair (with assistance from the Working Group Chairs).
These sessions are open to the public and offer an opportunity for dialogue among Council members, scientists, and members of the fishing industry on the assessment results and management advice.

SAW Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is an executive group comprised of the NER Regional Administrator, NEFSC Science and Research Director, and the Executive Directors of the NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC and chaired by the SAW Chair. The Steering Committee determines the stocks to be reviewed at each SAW and approves terms of reference, allocates personnel and funding resources to facilitate the assessment and peer review process, oversees the assessment and advisory process, sets dates and

venues for SARC and Public Review Workshop sessions, evaluates the sufficiency and style of the SAW Reports and any additional communication required, and guides the SAW policy.

SAW Schedule

Normally, there are two SAW cycles annually. For the first one, the SARC meeting is generally held in late June and the Public Review Workshop sessions completed by August, while for the second, the SARC meeting is held in late November or early December and the Public Review Workshop sessions completed in January or February. In 1997, however, there were three SAW cycles because a Congressionally-mandated external review (by the National Research Council) of the principal New England groundfish stocks necessiated an extraordinary SAW cycle (SARC in May). Contrary to the RAP, each SAW does not address a particular group of species. Rather, the stocks considered by the SAW are generally on a multi-year schedule. Whether or not a stock is addressed at the spring or autumn SAW is based on survey timing, data availability, and management schedules.

Keeping in mind the unique nature of the 1997 SAW process, the schedule of SAW-24, which considered Gulf of Maine cod, Georges Bank cod, Georges Bank haddock, Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, and Southern New England yellowtail flounder, is given in Figure III.2. Working Group meetings for spring SAWs are generally held in April or early May. In 1997, because the SARC meeting for SAW-24 was held 19-23 May, the assessments of the above five stocks were completed at a joint Northern Demersal and Southern Demersal Working Group meeting held 3-11 April. The NEFSC conducts its annual autumn trawl survey in September and October, and its annual spring survey in March and April, but the spring data are not available for use in any assessments for the spring SAW. The Public Review Workshop session for the NEFMC was held 10 July, and for the MAFMC on 14 August.

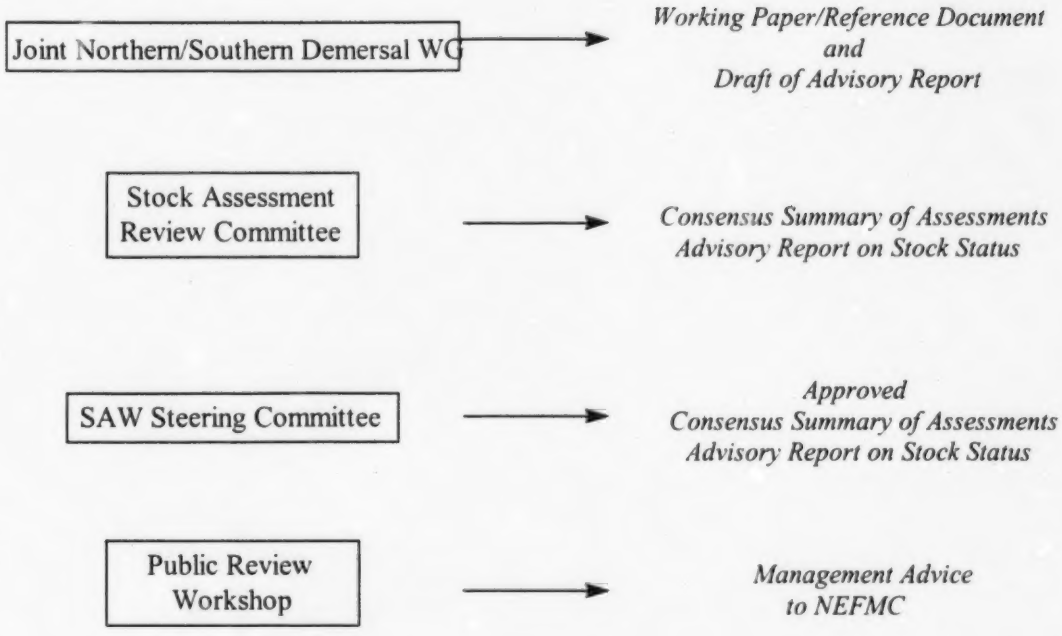

Figure III.1 USA SAW-24 for Georges Bank Groundfish

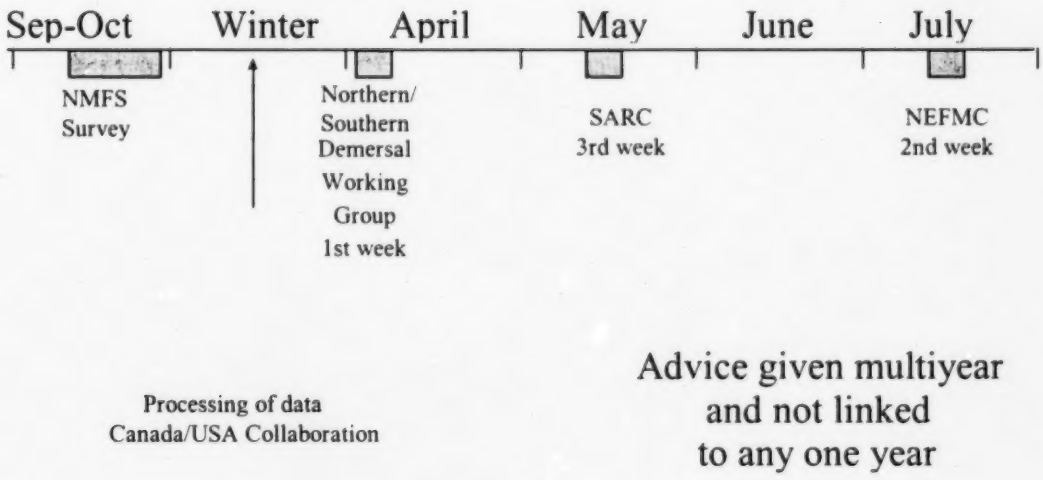

Figure III.2 SAW-24 Schedule for Georges Bank Groundfish